



## Natural Resources Assessment

### Introduction

Between 2004 and 2006, an assessment of natural resource data will be conducted to identify what data are available and useful in the General Management Planning process. This assessment should identify voids in information as well as natural resource issues that need to be addressed in the park's General Management Plan (GMP). Park staff (primarily natural resources) will work with a contractor/cooperator in a desktop review and synthesis of existing information.

Special funding was sought by the Northeast Region to support this effort on a pilot basis. The Office of the Associate Director for Natural Resources has chosen to use discretionary funding available to him to support this project. Similar projects are underway at New River Gorge National River and Fire Island National Seashore.

### Management Needs

This project responds, in part, to the need behind an unfunded request in the original Natural Resource Challenge budget strategy that called for a new planning framework

“In the past, planning has often proceeded without adequate information on resources, resulting in siting of facilities in a manner not sensitive to resource impacts. A new planning framework needs to be developed that ensures that available resource information is synthesized and interpreted for planning purposes, with information gaps and their significance analyzed.”

The project also responds to the National Parks Omnibus Management Act, P. L. 105- 391 and NPS Management Policies 2001, 2.3.1.5.

“Decisions documented in GMPs and other planning products..., will be based on current scientific and scholarly understanding of park ecosystems and cultural context, .... The collection and analysis of information about park resources will be a continuous process that will help ensure that decisions are consistent with park purposes.”

Shenandoah is scheduled to begin revisions of its GMP in the next several years. It is therefore timely to begin this assessment now so information will be available in advance of that planning effort.

### Current Activities

The National Park Service has entered into an agreement with Pennsylvania State University to prepare this assessment. To date the principal investigator has reviewed documentation available in park files, started interviews with park staff, and conducted two workshops with subject matter experts (one on wildlife and one on geology). It is anticipated that at least one and maybe a second workshop related to botanical resources and landscape ecology will be conducted in the coming months. Workshops will not be held on water or air resources because the park has recently finished two keystone documents on those topical areas. These are the Air Resources Assessment and the Water Resources Scoping Report.

In addition to developing an understanding of the state of knowledge regarding park natural resources, the investigator is tasked with preparing potential desired future condition statements. These will be considered by park planners as they formulate goals and objectives for the GMP. Historically GMPs have been largely directed at outlining future conditions for facilities and visitor use and have only treated natural resources lightly. It is hoped that this advance work will result in improved GMP direction for natural resources.

The final assessment is anticipated sometime in 2006.



*Workshop participants getting an introduction to park geology.*